

What You Say Versus What They Hear

On purpose, thought filled communication will save you time, avoid embarrassment, and make you very happy. My other article 'Communication Impact Control' is the prologue to this article. This covers the 7% impact of your communication. **Mastering communication** involves applied strategy. **It is powerful when sequenced correctly and prioritized appropriately.** If you are communicating in a visual medium, you know the visual element is top priority at 55%. The auditory is a close second in impact at 38%. Last is the actual content at 7%.

The first televised debate, Kennedy/Nixon, Kennedy won with the television audience. He was smiling, confident, and relaxed. Nixon displayed a stoic tenseness. His answers were didactic, precise. Nixon won the debate with the radio listeners. **Content is more valuable when the visual is absent.** So when you write it is 100% impact.

As an adult are you more receptive to someone telling you or sharing with you? A listener identified by the questions they ask are more fun than a non stop talker. We have all been around people who talk beyond what they know. Do you find it enjoyable when another person prompts you by saying 'tell me more'. When thinking of the 7% use words that work. When persuading, inspiring or motivating choose positive words. I prefer vs. I hate, learning vs. failing, misunderstood vs. rejected, different vs. terrible. When correcting or reprimanding choose carefully. Ask for clarification. 'Am I mistaken or do I hear sarcasm in your tone?' 'I have been wrong before. Please tell me your full intent.' Use your 6 honest serving men: who, what, where, how, when, and sometimes why. **Using questions is an effective strategy when fine tuning the 7% impact element.**

Practice, practice, practice. Thought filled, **on purpose communication is not a gift.** It is not accidental. Get in front of a mirror. Recall experiences from your past; negative, frustrating, anger producing. Put yourself in one of those situations. Look at your expression. Now change the expression to neutral. I know it is difficult – I practice, too. From neutral adjust to questioning. No – not sarcastic, questioning. Shoot for a questioning look that conveys sincerely seeking the other person's intent. Now breathe deep, fill those lungs. Alerts the other person – you are thinking. It also forces fresh oxygen to your brain and supports clearer thinking. Now use the appropriate phrase. The more you learn about how you look – use a mirror, ask trusted family, friends. Know how you sound. Ask for feedback. Act out scenarios and have your trusted family, friends evaluate. Get a thesaurus. Expand your arsenal of 7% content. Use it on purpose.

When visiting a new friend at her house I was impressed with her furniture, décor, and color choices. I didn't just tell her I liked her house. I told her it was elegant. It was. Do you think she remembered my comment?

On a Saturday in the ED I was next up for the ambulance arrival. I received an elderly lady, recent CVA. While I was hooking up the patient the admitting clerk entered the room. The clerk had the 'deer in the headlights' look. She informed me that the son was in the waiting room and did not want anything done to his mother without his knowledge.

I told the clerk to bring him back. (We have the open family policy.) When the son entered the room I continued my preparations, but I introduced myself and advised him of the following. I told him the ambulance report, I told him the tests we would perform, and I told him we would be calling his mother's doctor after the tests came back. The son was attending to the detail I was giving. His appearance told me this.

My delivery of this information was not defensive or offensive. My 55% and 38% were conveying what I wanted. I was communicating with a very involved son. My 55% and 38% were informing him that it is all about his mother - just where he wanted my care to be directed. The 7% content was in alignment with the other impact elements. I was congruent. It happened smoothly due to practice. He listened.

Mark Twain wrote that the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and a lightening bug. Choose the right word. Words that work.

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